

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2284

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, UK

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S PERFORMANCE DURING WILSON'S VISIT

1. ACCORDING UK HEAD OF CHANCERY MALLABY, WHO BRIEFED US ON WILSON VISIT FEBRUARY 18, BRITISH BELIEVE THAT THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE VISIT (13-17 FEBRUARY) BREZHNEV WAS IN GOOD FORM PHYSICALLY AND POLITICALLY. HE HAD MASTERED HIS BRIEFS REASONABLY WELL, AND HE SHOWED LITTLE SIGN OF FATIGUE. IN A BACKGROUND BRIEFING TO THE BRITISH PRESS, FOREIGN MINISTER CALLAGHAN SAID "IF THAT'S WHAT HE'S LIKE WHEN HE'S SICK, I WOULD HATE TO SEE HIM WHEN HE'S WELL" SUMMING UP OUR BRITISH EMBASSY SORUCE SAID THAT BREZHNEV WAS "ON TOP OF HIS MATES AND ON TOP OF HIS PAPERS."

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2. THIS ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH

A BELIEF THAT BREZHNEV MAY HAVE SONE PROBLEMS WITH HIS JAW AND CHEEK. ONE MFA OFFICIAL TOLD THE BRITISH EMBASSY THAT SOMETHING DID SEEM TO BE WRONG WITH BREZHNEV'S LEFT CHEEK. AND THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN LONDON, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TALKS, SPECULATED THAT BREZHNEV MIGHT HAVE A PROBLEM WITH HIS TEETH. DURING THE TALKS BREZHNEV FREQUENTLY KEPT HIS HAND TO HIS CHIN AND PULLED AT HIS COLLAR. THERE WAS ALSO A CLEAR PROBLEM OF DRYNESS IN HIS MOUTH. NO EXTERNAL SCAR WAS APPARENT, SO IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ANY TREATMENT BREZHNEV MAY HAVE RECEIVED WAS INTERNAL.

3. THE BRITISH HAD BEEN TOLD EARLY IN THE VISIT THAT BREZHNEV WOULD NOT ATTEND WILSON'S RETURN LUNCH ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17. THAT MORNING, HOWEVER, THEY RECEIVED A COUNTER INDICATION WITH A MESSAGE THAT PROVISIONS SHOULD BE MADE FOR TEN OF BREZHNEV'S SECURITY GUARDS AT THE LUNCH. IN THE EVENT BREZHNEV DID NOT TURN UP.

4. DURING THE TALKS BREZHNEV, AS USUAL, DOMINATED THE CONVERSATION FOR THE SOVIET SIDE. HE OCCASIONALLY TURNED TO KOSYGIN TO SPEAK, PARTICULARLY ON ECONOMIC ISSUES. EVEN KOSYGIN, HOWEVER, DID NOT TALK MUCH. AS USUAL, BREZHNEV NEVER TURNED TO GROMYKO FOR A STATEMENT. THIS WAS IN CONTRAST WITH THE BRITISH APPROACH, IN WHICH WILSON TURNED OFTEN TO CALLAGHAN FOR AN EXPRESSION OF THE BRITISH POSITION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

5. BRITISH OBSERVED BREZHNEV HUNGILY EYEING TIME LOCK ON CIGARETTE CASE; HE SMOKED 2 1/2 PACKS OF CIGARETTES PER DAY. HE ATE SPARINGLY BUT ACCEPTED ALL DRINKS OFFERED. HIS VOICE WAS STRONG BUT ENUNCIATION PROBLEM CONTINUES.

6. FOR WHATEVER IT IS WORTH, UK NAVATT WAS TOLD BY MRS. BREZHNEV DURING COURSE OF VISIT THAT HER HUSBAND IS NOW IN GOOD HEALTH BUT HAD SUFFERED THE "GRIPPE." STOESSEL
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